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# Germany and the War

A SERMON

BY THE

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## GERMANY AND THE WAR

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*"Thou, Oh King, art a King of Kings."* Daniel 2:37.

The German Kaiser rules over more kings than ever stood at the foot of Nebuchadnezzar's throne. In the confederation of which he is the chief, there are four kings, including himself, Prussia, Bavaria, Saxony and Wurtemberg. There are six Grand Duchies—each Grand Duke is almost a king: one more step up and he sits on his own throne; five Duchies, seven principalities, three free cities—Bremen, Hamburg and Lubeck; and one imperial province, Alsace-Lorraine.

In this great confederation, so very like and yet so very unlike ours, there are 209,000 square miles, just about the size of France, which is 60,000 square miles less than our State of Texas, and 588,000 square miles less than Alaska, and 2,954,000 square miles less than the United

States, without Alaska. But bigness is not necessarily greatness. The population of these 209,000 square miles is 65,000,000, and the army, on a war footing, is five millions and a half.

Modern Germany is the legitimate successor of the mediæval empire called The Holy Roman Empire, which governed that section of Europe which we now speak of as Germany, for eight hundred and forty-two years. It has been said of it—that it was not an Empire—that it was not Roman—and that it was the very furthest possible removed from being holy. The best thing The Holy Roman Empire ever did was to offer itself as a subject for an essay to a young Oxford graduate, twenty-six years of age. In making that book James Bryce made himself famous.

The modern German Empire is a Prussian product; and Prussia herself, as a dominant power, is of yesterday. It was not until after the victory of Königgratz, in 1866, that the voice of Prussia compelled attention even in Europe; but Prussian history extends its roots very much farther back. Within a hundred years after William came from Normandy, and, landing on the shores of England, conquered Harold of Hastings, becoming henceforth “William The Conqueror”—William of Germany seems not unwilling to follow in the wake of that same little vessel, and, landing on the same shores, gain, if may be, the same title.

In 1170, then one hundred and four years after the Norman conquest, a younger son named Conrad left his father’s castle of Hohenzollern, in Swabia. “Hohenzollern” means “the high toll place,” and many of you have seen the castle, doubtless, as you have passed quite within sight of it on the

railway. Young Conrad went to the Court of Barbarossa, the great emperor of that day of The Holy Roman Empire, and, being very attractive and winning, he advanced rapidly. He married the daughter of the Burggraf of Nuremberg and soon became Burggraf himself. In the constant shuffle, in which kingdoms and principalities were the cards, the successors of this Burggraf found themselves Electors of Brandenburg, known to us as Prussia. From that time the history of Prussia becomes the history of the Hohenzollerns, and the history of the Hohenzollerns is the history of Germany.

The first epoch we must notice in that history is the Reformation. Martin Luther was a German monk, born in Saxon Eisleben, and dying in Eisleben, but teaching most of his life at Wittemberg, and Wittemberg is on a wide, sandy plain 60 miles south of Berlin.

In Martin Luther's day, there was no king in Prussia—only an elector—Joachim II. He fell under the influence of Martin Luther, and many of his people were converts of the new doctrine. This elector did what many other electors and princes of that era did: he took his electorate over with him into the Reformed Church, and from that time Prussia has been nominally Protestant. Whether Joachim himself and the majority of his subjects were really converted, except to Protestantism as a theological system, is very doubtful.

The second epoch is that of the Thirty Years' War, a war more horrible, I think, even than that which now tears Europe asunder, for it was a so-called "Religious War." Men hated each other and killed each other be-

cause some were Protestants and some were Catholics—and for no other reason whatever. When that war began, in 1618, there were thirty millions of people living in Germany, and when that war ended, in 1648, there were twelve millions of people left alive. Whole provinces had been desolated and great cities, like Magdeburg, were left without one stone upon another.

The third epoch is that of Frederick the Great. Two Englishmen have written the life of Frederick, in whole or in part, with equal eloquence—Thomas Carlyle and Thomas B. Macaulay. Frederick is Carlyle's hero and Macaulay's detestation. Carlyle said that in a century of chicanery and fraud and lying, Frederick was the one man who dared to be true, and Macaulay said "That in order to rob a neighbor—Maria Theresa—whom he had promised to defend, black men fought on the coast of Coromandel and red men scalped each other on the Great Lakes of North America."

Frederick the Great is confessedly the ideal of William the Second, and the character of William the Second is, perhaps, equally problematic.

The fourth epoch is that of the Napoleonic Wars. When we Americans read the story of the wars of Napoleon we are pro-German and pro-Prussian, at least *pro tem*. Beautiful and unhappy Queen Louise, as she comes down the stairway in the picture that hangs in every German gallery, and copies of which are in every German home—walks straight into our hearts. When she weeps, after the overwhelming defeat of Jena, asking Napoleon only that her country might not be utterly crushed, we weep with her and wish that she might have been king in the place of



her timid husband. Napoleon, as he stood by the tomb of the great Frederick, said, so the story runs, "Had he been alive, we would never have been here." Had Queen Louise worn the crown, Napoleon might never have conquered Prussia. When she pleaded with Napoleon that the kingdom might not be dismembered, he smiled a sardonic smile, and wrote in his diary that, in spite of her beauty and tears, she got nothing from him. When she stands hopeless beside the broken carriage, in which she had fled with her two boys, while the enemy is in hot pursuit, we look away with dimmed eyes. Fifty-five years later the younger of those boys stands, not as a captive, but as a conqueror, in Versailles, and there, amid his generals, his princes and his kings he is crowned *Emperor of Germany*, within the walls covered with great paintings depicting the victories of Napoleon and the shame of Prussia!

The fifth epoch is that of modern Germany, which began with that coronation in 1871 in the French city.

The 26 units of modern Germany are combined together more closely than the units which make up our Republic. They have a President for life, and he is chosen already before he is born. As long as the family of Hohenzollern shall continue to exist, and Germany shall hold to its confederation, the oldest son of the reigning Hohenzollern inherits the imperial crown.

It was my great privilege, in the winter of 1878-9, to be a student in the University of Berlin, and I am frank to say that I became as thorough a German as it is possible for a man to be who has very little aptitude for the German tongue, and who considers German philosophy and German

beer impossible. The most memorable incident of that winter was the return of the Emperor, William the First—whom the Germans have always tried to call William the Great, without much success. The homecoming of the Emperor after his restoration to health—the assassin had almost taken his life, and he had been away for some months—was a national festival. He came back to Berlin with Bismarck, by whose diplomacy and by whose duplicity Germany had been made an empire and he had been made an Emperor. With him were all the royal family, and all the great generals who had fought in the Franco-Prussian War, and the reception the people gave their Emperor was little short of adoration.

If only his son, Frederick the Good, had lived—if only he had lived! But those short days of his reign passed before he had time to work out any of the reforms that filled his heart. Then came to the throne of Prussia, and to the imperial throne of Germany, the grandson of the first William, William the Second, a man whose abilities are undoubtedly greater than those of his grandfather, but whose philanthropy is undoubtedly less than his father's.

We cannot conceive what the Emperor is to the German people. If only our "Uncle Sam" were not a caricature; if he were more of a real father, if he were the embodiment of all that we mean by our flag and our national hymn—"My Country, 'Tis of Thee"—if he were all this at one and the same time, he would be to us what the German Emperor is to the German people. He is not a person. He is a personification, an ideal.

After William the Second came to the throne he very soon "dropped his pilot," the great Bismarck, who died of a broken heart like Napoleon, and like every man who lives simply for dominion and power. He confessed, in his *Reminiscences*, that he had instigated three great wars—the war against Denmark, the war against Austria, and the war against France—and had done many other noteworthy and notorious things, but life had been far from satisfying.

After he dropped the pilot, William the Second took the helm and gave the signal "Full speed ahead," and the response was instantaneous. Germany, during his reign, has broken all old world records. The Germans, when William came to the throne, were an agricultural people. Soon a great stroke of good fortune came to them in a most unexpected way. I remember hearing the American Consul at Mannheim say to one of his German friends, "You are really eating the bones of your ancestors. There is not a square inch of your land that has not been exhausted, and all the nutriment that comes from it is from ancestral nitrates."

It is not a pleasant thought, but nevertheless it was only too true. A few decades ago, owing to a bad debt—it is said—in Chile, Germany found herself possessed of a strip of desert land along the western coast of Chile, running up into Peru, and these lands were found to be incalculably rich in nitrates. There are no taxes in Chile. The revenue is raised from the nitrate beds. Whenever any one in Chile suggests anything that ought to be done by civic contributions and generosity, everyone else reminds them of the ni-

trate beds. These Chilian nitrate beds were a tremendous boon for Germany. They doubled her harvest. It was as if she had added an acre to every acre she then possessed. When we ask why emigration to the United States from Germany is so much less than twenty-five years ago the answer is largely to be found in the nitrate beds of Chile.

Germany's agricultural gains delayed, but did not prevent, her transformation from an agricultural to an industrial community. In her industries and manufactures she has showed more than Yankee ingenuity. When her manufacturers found that in India all the egg cups coming from England were much too large for the small eggs of India, the Germans made egg cups to fit the eggs—and there is not an English egg cup for sale in all India today.

When the Africans insisted on using English scissors, made at Sheffield, with fine, sharp points, in the place of razors as weapons of defence and offence, the English paid no attention to the slaughter, but the Germans sent out round, dull-pointed scissors, useless as weapons, and no other scissors are now used in Africa.

When the South Americans, from Peru all the way to Chile, and from Chile all the way up to Brazil, wanted certain kinds of goods with pink ribbons, and certain other kinds of goods with iron bands—Englishmen and Americans said “nonsense,” but the Germans delivered the goods and drove the Englishmen and Americans from those markets.

It was said in Goethe's time that the gods had given the land to France, the sea to England, and the air to

Germany. But we Americans taught Germany how to conquer the air with our aeroplanes, and then, with her extraordinary aptness, she went much beyond her teacher and made better aeroplanes and dirigibles—of which we have none—and with them she has conquered the air, and now she thinks it would be as well, incidentally, to conquer the sea and the land. She has already, partly, conquered the sea. She is second only to England in her commerce, and she surpasses England in the North German Lloyd and the Hamburg-American lines—the two greatest steamship lines in the world.

Germany has done not a little, also, in conquering the land. German roads are as good as French roads—and French roads are the best in the world. German hotels, of which, years ago, many American and English travelers found much fault, in the smaller cities at least, are far better than French hotels. The German towns are the most perfectly kept in the world, and the German trees in all the municipalities are only excelled by the trees in our own city.

The greatest names in Germany—for which we thank God—are not the names of marshals and admirals; they are the names of philosophers like Leibnitz and Lotze; of poets like Goethe and Schiller; of historians like Mommsen and Mosheim; of scientists like Von Humboldt and Roentgen. But the greatest name in German history, some of us think, is the name of the greatest of the world's reformers, Martin Luther, whose hymn we have sung tonight.

But this modern Germany has been drinking very deep of the cup of which we have been glad to drink all that it

was possible for us to secure for our own personal use, the very inebriating cup of prosperity. In that cup there is a deadly poison. It is the poison of materialism, and that poison manifests itself by different symptoms. Here in America the Germans tell us it has manifested itself in Mammonism, the worship of the almighty dollar, and they charge us with caring for nothing but money. They are not conscious that they have the same poison in their veins. It shows itself in Germany by what we call militarism—but it is the same poison.

We have been a little less responsive to that poison than the Germans, because we have breathed better air. Our environment has been more favorable. We have never known what it was to be “cribbed, cabined and confined.” When we want to stretch, we stretch out toward Alaska, and your children’s children’s children may continue to stretch without any danger. But when the German giant wants to stretch, where is he going to stretch to? He says, “These Lilliputians,” as he calls them, “have closed all the doors.” They have shut the door to the Adriatic, and, during the last war, to the opulent East via the Bagdad Railway. They have left two or three little apertures on the Baltic, and a slit, the Kiel Canal, for which I paid half as much as you paid for the Panama Canal, which gives me an entrance into the North Sea, and I have one or two small ports besides, but I can scarcely breathe. I am the world’s greatest military power—you Americans say so, and it must be so—but, commercially, I am in Egyptian bondage to England.”

At that opportune or inopportune moment came Mephistopheles. He wore a helmet and sword, and hissed, "There are but two alternatives for you—dominion or death." Later he came in the guise of a philosopher, calling himself Nietzsche or Treitschke, or Bernhardi. Philosophic militarism pushed out the old idealistic philosophy that made the German for so many centuries seemingly a dreamer, remote from the practical affairs of men. Each of this modern trio teaches that war is righteous, that war is a necessity for a people that would not grow soft and effeminate.

The poison of this materialism has hardened the arteries of Germany, and if you would see the proof of it, don't ask them in England or France for it, but go to Germany and look at her art. Look at her Sieges Säule, her column of Victory, flaunting itself in the Thiergarten, the park of Berlin. Look at that long row of amazing statues of conquerors, or would-be conquerors, in the same park, and compare their floridness with the simplicity of Frederick the Great's statue in Unter den Linden. If you are not satisfied, go to the little city of Worms, and stand beneath the superb statue of Martin Luther, the man of the Book, and around him men like himself, men with the Book—all reformers and teachers and prophets—and from Worms take the rapid express train—there are few more rapid or better in the world—to Hamburg, and stand there under the statue of the man of blood and iron, Von Bismarck. The great Chancellor, girdled about seemingly by cannon, with a great sword at his side and fire flashing from his stern eyes, is the incarnation of the philosophic militarism of Nietzsche,

Treitschke and Bernhardt which he foresaw and feared. It is as if we had erected here a colossal statue to George Washington in the guise of a multi-millionaire.

“ ’Tis but the moral of all human tales,  
’Tis but the oft-repeated story of the past :  
First freedom, then glory ; when that fails,  
Wealth, vice, corruption, barbarism at the last.”

Goethe said: “It is only a little while ago that we Germans were barbarians.” That does not matter much. It is only a little while ago that we Americans, wherever our ancestors came from, were barbarians. What does matter is this: How long will it be before Germany or America, passing swiftly from freedom to glory, shall come to wealth—we are in that stage or near it now, some think—to vice, corruption, barbarism at the last?

“This war,” the young Crown Prince says, “ is the most unnecessary and useless that has been fought in modern times.” It is the most unnecessary and useless and criminal, probably, that has ever been fought. But, if those men who profess to be Christians, in Germany, and in England, and in France, and in Russia and Austria, would but pray—and supposedly they are all men of prayer—not “my kingdom come,” but “Thy kingdom come,” and if that prayer were echoed by their marshals and admirals and by their men in the trenches, might not the hour come speedily—if the peoples of those lands, and the peoples of the whole world would join that prayer, meaning what they say—when a flag of truce would be sent out, and these men would rise from



the trenches and fling down their guns and grasp each other's hands, crying: "Brothers all! Sons of the same Father! We cannot kill each other." You say it is incredible; that it is fantastic and visionary. We heard here, from this very pulpit, this afternoon of modern miracles in China, where a wall greater than the Great Wall, the impenetrable wall around the *Literati*, the scholar class, suddenly fell in the midst of the Boxer uprising, and multitudes of the class which had spurned Christianity, with unspeakable scorn, turned to Christ, giving up the sage Confucius for the lowly Nazarene.

Miracles! "Men of blood and iron," you say, these rulers of Europe are, but blood is thicker than water, and iron—when you strike it with iron, rings and flashes, and when you heat it, it grows red and hisses with its heat, but when you raise the temperature a little more the hard iron melts and mingles with all the melting iron around, and who can then tell whether it was iron from Germany, or Russia, or England, or France? Ah! If these men would only pray. The diplomats say there are great difficulties—impossible difficulties—in the way of peace. There is only one difficulty—the lack of love. Let them but love. Let them but come together in love, and each might have all they want without shedding a drop of blood. Germany might get those last 60 miles of the Rhine, and her ships could float untroubled to the sea; France might get back Alsace-Lorraine; England might keep what she has got—she has enough—and Russia might go down to Constantinople and make it a free city like Hamburg, Lubeck or Bremen—and the Turks might be glad to retire to the quiet

safety of Mecca. It only means a little raising of temperature, and it is done.

What Germany needs—this wonderful Germany—is not more schools, for her schools are among the best in the world. She has only one per cent of illiteracy. Her universities have drawn the best scholars of England and America, who count it a high privilege to sit in her lecture halls—what Germany needs is not more science or philosophy; not even more music; but what she needs is another reformer like Martin Luther, a fearless man before kings and princes and emperors, a man who shall call the people back, not to the god of Joshua, or Gideon, or Judas Macabaeus, a god of war—it is dangerous to speak of such a god in Germany—but to the God and Father of Our Lord, Jesus Christ; a man who shall dare to say, in court and camp, as well as in church, that God rules in the heavens and on earth, and that it shall not profit a man, be he Kaiser, King or serf, to win the world and lose the holy fire that burns in every man's soul until it is extinguished. That great as Germany is—and France, and England, and Russia, and Austria, and the United States—if any one of them, or all of them combined, shall dare to break the laws of God, they shall each and all utterly perish.







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